

In the Claims:

1-27 (cancelled)

28. (amended) A method of improving the agronomic properties of a plant comprising:  
E1 maintaining plant vigor and hardness under stressful conditions by providing the plant with increased cellular levels of a nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin, thereby maintaining cell energy status in a low oxygen environment and; and  
growing the plant under stressful conditions, thereby allowing the plant to develop more vigorously under adverse conditions.

29. (previously added) The method according to claim 28 wherein the nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin is barley nonsymbiotic hemoglobin.

30. (previously added) The method according to claim 28 wherein the improved agronomic properties include germination.

31. (previously added) The method according to claim 28 wherein the improved agronomic properties include seedling vigour.

32. (previously added) The method according to claim 28 wherein the improved agronomic properties include reduced cellular levels of fermentation products.

33. (previously added) The method according to claim 28 wherein the improved agronomic properties include increased oxygen uptake.

34. (previously added) The method according to claim 28 wherein the improved agronomic properties include increased tolerance to hypoxic conditions.

35. A method of selecting seeds for breeding to produce seed lines having desirable characteristics increased levels of nonsymbiotic hemoglobin for maintaining energy status in low oxygen environments comprising:

E2 providing a representative seed of a given seed line;  
growing the seed such that the seed germinates;

isolating an extract from the seed;

*Ez*  
measuring levels of nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin expression  
within the extract; and

*Ct Oth*  
selecting or rejecting the seed for further breeding based on the  
hemoglobin levels, wherein increased levels of nonsymbiotic hemoglobin  
maintain energy status in low oxygen environments.

36. (previously added) The method according to claim 35

wherein the nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin is barley nonsymbiotic hemoglobin.

37. (previously added) A method of determining if a seed is  
germinating comprising:

providing a seed suspected of germinating;

isolating an extract from the seed; and

measuring levels of nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin expression  
within the extract,

wherein high levels of nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin expression  
indicate that the seed is germinating.

38. (previously added) The method according to claim 37

wherein the nonsymbiotic plant hemoglobin is barley nonsymbiotic hemoglobin.